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# NORTHERN ESKIMO STORIES





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## CREDITS

1. The Boy Who Couldn't Cry - adapted from a story by Peter Tagarook, \*ANOLP #218.
2. The Enchanted Sky - adapted from "The Enchanted Sky" in Eskimo Legends by Lela Kiana Oman, 1975, AMU Press, pp 115-116.
3. Day - adapted from a story by Oliver James, ANOLP #239.
4. Feet - adapted from a story by Oliver James, ANOLP #219.
5. The Sea Serpent - adapted from "The Sea Serpent" in Eskimo Legends by Lela Kiana Oman, 1975, AMU Press, pp 111-113.
6. Kayak Man - adapted from "With a Kayak" - a story by Oliver James, ANOLP #240.
7. The Blind Boy and the Loon - adapted from "The Blind Boy and the Loon" in The Blind Boy and the Loon and Other Myths by Ramona Maher, 1969, John Day Co., N.Y., pp 17-30 and "The Blind Boy and the Loon" as told by Emily Barr to Martha Barr in Tales of Eskimo Alaska, 1971, AMU Press, pp 62-67.
8. The Story of Kotzebue - adapted from "Okailuk's Story of Kotzebue" in Tales of Eskimo Alaska, pp 53-61.



### THE BOY WHO COULDN'T CRY

Once there was a couple, a man and woman, who had a boy who couldn't cry. No one knew why he couldn't cry. The parents were sad to think their son could not cry. They even said they would pay any person who could make him cry. Yet no matter how hard people tried, no one had any luck.

Finally a very poor boy came and spoke to the parents. He said, "I can make your son cry."

The mother just laughed at the poor boy.

"Many people have already tried," she said. "Nobody can do it."

"I can do it!" said the poor boy. After saying this he went off to play with their son.





A little while later the two boys came back. "Look!" shouted the mother. "I see the boys coming. Our son is crying! How did you make him cry?" she asked the poor boy.

The poor boy smiled. "I chose a plant growing over there," he said. "I gave him wild onions to eat, and the onions made tears come to his eyes. He began to cry."

The parents thanked the poor boy again and again. "Take this," they said to him, and they gave the poor boy some money. It was the money they had promised to give the person who was finally able to make their son cry.





### THE ENCHANTED SKY

One day three young men were out in \*kayaks hunting seals. A little distance out from the shore they came to a spot where the water was smooth like glass. The young men looked in wonder, for all around this spot the sea was choppy.



\*A kayak is a small skin-covered boat for one or two men.



At the spot where the sea was so smooth, the sky seemed to come down and meet the water. The sky was like a solid ceiling coming down. At the strange sight, the men began to be frightened.

"Let's turn back," said one. However, the man in the lead kept going towards the sky. When he arrived at the spot where the sky met the glassy sea, he saw a crack in the sky.

"Come back! Come back!" called his friends, but the young man did not listen.







He stood up in his kayak and put his head through the crack in the sky. He wanted to see what was up there. His friends heard him call. "Come quickly and see how beautiful it is up here. There are flowers everywhere. There are trees full of fruit. I am going to climb up."





His friends pleaded with him to come back with them, but he would not listen. That was the last they ever saw of him. Although the people came back later in \*umiaks to search for the young man, he was never found. Only his kayak was left. Everyone knew he had been claimed by the "enchanted sky."

\* An umiak is a large skinboat that can carry lots of people.

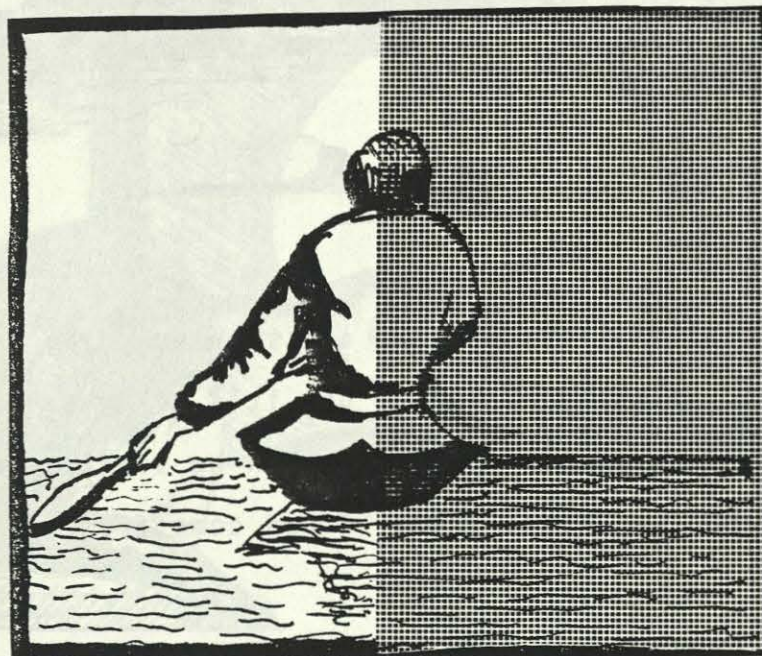


## DAY

In the beginning, it was dark a lot of the time. Nobody knew when day or night would come. Sometimes daytime came really slowly. Other times it came very quickly.

"Why do we never know when daytime is going to come?" asked a young man. He decided he would go and find the place where Day came from. "Please get me my boots, Mom," he said. "I'm going to go away for a while."

After saying good-bye, the young man left to find the place where Day came from. He took his boat right through the middle of Day and Night.





On the other side of the ocean he came to land. It was night time when he arrived so he decided to sleep. Just before dawn he woke up. He was just in time to see some kind of round light coming up in the sky. What he saw was Day.

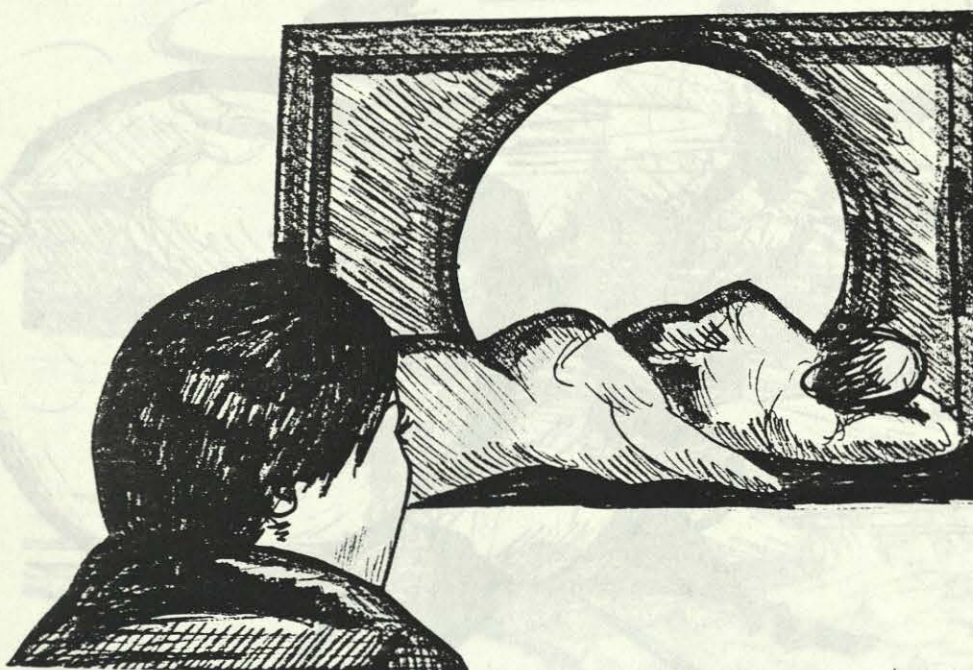


The ball of light went up and started going around. The man started thinking, "I wonder how it's going to become night." He had been watching a long time when he saw the daytime disappear in the same place where it had come from.



Quickly the young man jumped in his boat and started off in the direction where Day had disappeared. When he got to the place, he saw a light. It was so bright he could hardly look at it. "Oh, my eyes!" he said, turning away for a moment. It was like a bright ball inside a house. In the daytime it came out of the house; at night time it went back in.

For a while the man just watched. Then he decided to go closer. Leaving his boat handy by the shore, he went up to the house and looked in the window. Inside was a round, bright object. Sleeping beside it was a man.





Quietly the young man tiptoed into the house towards the bright ball. When he got close enough he grabbed the bright thing which was Day, and ran out of the house.

As he was running towards his boat, he heard an angry voice calling, "Give me back my light! Give me back my light!" Just in time, the young man carrying Day got to his boat and jumped in. The other man had no boat in which to follow him.

The young man escaped in his boat, keeping the ball of light right beside him. When he got home he let Day go and Day went all over the world. That is why from that time on, there has always been Day-time and Night-time.

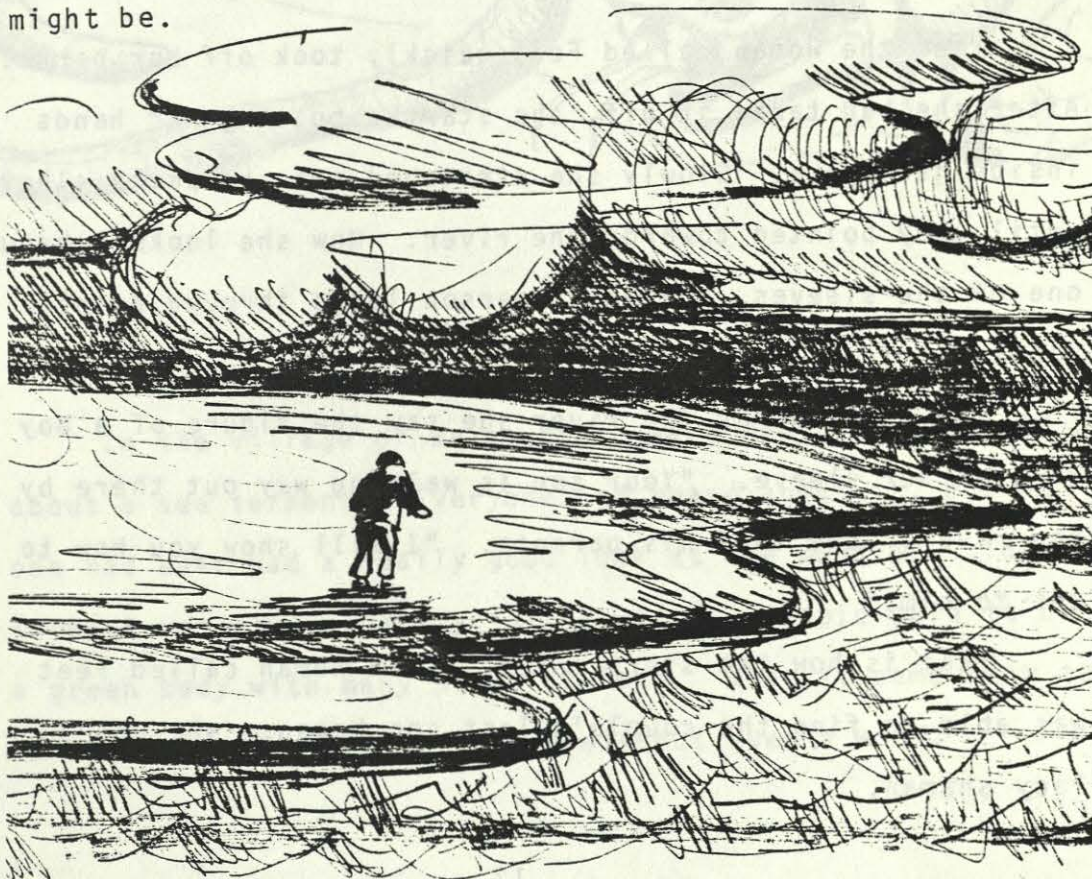




## FEET

When I was growing up, Wainwright had eight people. There was a woman who was different from other people. Her name meant "Feet". There was also a couple living there who had a son called "Head". His name meant Head in Eskimo.

One time during a bad storm, Head got lost. There was a south wind blowing. It was really bad weather. The wind was blowing fiercely and heavy fog was drifting in from the sea. The parents were worrying because they had not found their son anywhere. They asked Feet if she knew where he might be.





The woman called Feet said, "I am trying to see where your son could be. If we don't find him soon, he will be wandering farther and farther from home in this storm."



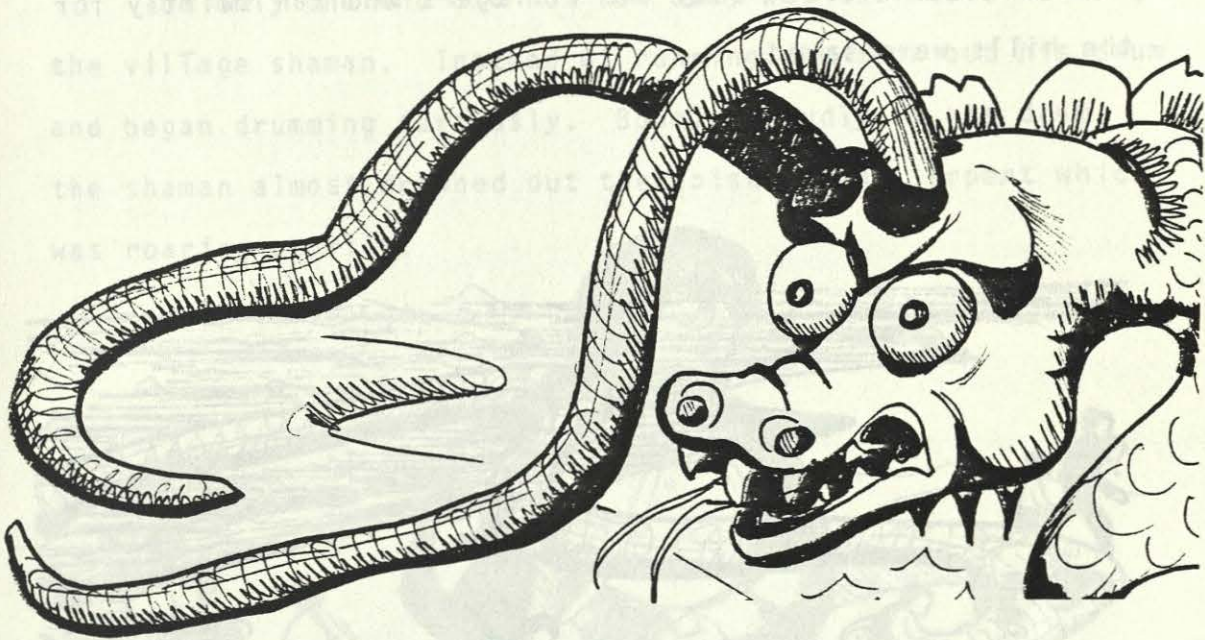
Then the woman called Feet quickly took off her parka. After she had taken it off, she started putting her hands inside her parka. Slowly she stretched out the parka sleeves until they pointed towards the river. Now she looked through one of the sleeves, the way a person looks through a telescope.

Way out towards the river she saw the figure of a boy through her sleeve. "Your son is walking way out there by the river," she told his parents. "I will show you how to get to him."

That is how the story ended. That woman called Feet was able to find the couple's lost son because she was a lady shaman.



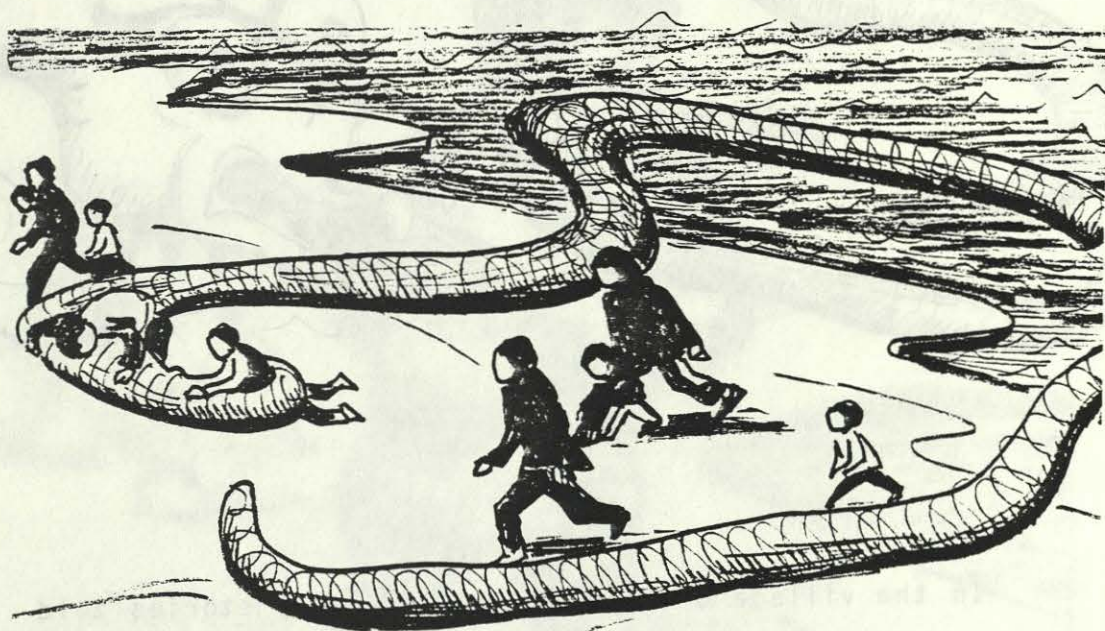
## THE SEA SERPENT



In the village of Wales there were many stories told about a sea serpent. Everyone had heard about it, but no one had ever had a really good look at the monster. The serpent was always partly in the water. People said it had a green body with many pairs of legs. When it came near the village, the sea became choppy without even a wind.



The monster had a pair of very long antennae on its head. The antennae could stretch up slowly from the sea and wrap around the whole village. With its antennae the monster dragged many people into the sea. Some of the people were greedily eaten by the monster. Others just drowned in the sea. Only the villagers who ran swiftly for the hills were saved.





One sunny day the sea was very calm and nobody was expecting anything. People were going happily about their business. Suddenly the sea became choppy. People turned their eyes towards the sea. Then everyone began running fast towards the hills.

The only one who did not run away was the medicine man, the village shaman. Instead of running, he took out his drum and began drumming furiously. Booming loudly on his drum, the shaman almost drowned out the noise of the serpent which was roaring angrily.





Calmly, the shaman looked down hard into the sea. There he saw a pair of huge, orange eyes glaring back at him. While the shaman watched, he saw the monster slowly lifting its antennae out of the water.

"Have mercy!" called the shaman. "Please do not harm us." While saying this, the shaman beat on his drum and sang softly to the monster.

Gradually the slimy green antennae disappeared back into the sea. The bright, orange eyes became dull. Finally the monster itself backed out quietly into the sea.

From that day on, the sea monster was never seen again.





### KAYAK MAN

Once there was a young man who lived beside the ocean with his parents. The young man's father had taught him many things. He had taught him to be brave. He had taught him how to use a kayak and hunt the whale.

One day the young man was out hunting on the ocean by himself. That day the waves were very high. Because it was so foggy, the young man could not see where he was going. He soon lost his way.

For several days he was lost. He was traveling by day, sleeping by night. Finally he saw a huge hill along the shore.





After beaching his kayak, he climbed quickly up the steep hill. Up on top he saw a big house. The young man went into the house. There he saw a really huge woman standing over a boiling pot. Whatever she was cooking smelled good. The young man didn't know it then, but the big woman was a lady shaman. It was people she was cooking in her pot.

"Where did you come from?" asked the big woman.

"I got lost on the ocean," he replied. "This was the first place I came to."





It was then the woman told him she was a lady shaman.  
"I make people get lost on the ocean," she said. "When they  
find their way here, I cook them and eat them."

The young man was suddenly afraid. He watched the lady  
shaman take her Eskimo woman's knife and put it in the middle  
of the floor. "I am going to catch you," she told him. "When  
I catch you I will throw you on this knife and kill you. If  
you catch me first, you throw me on the knife instead."

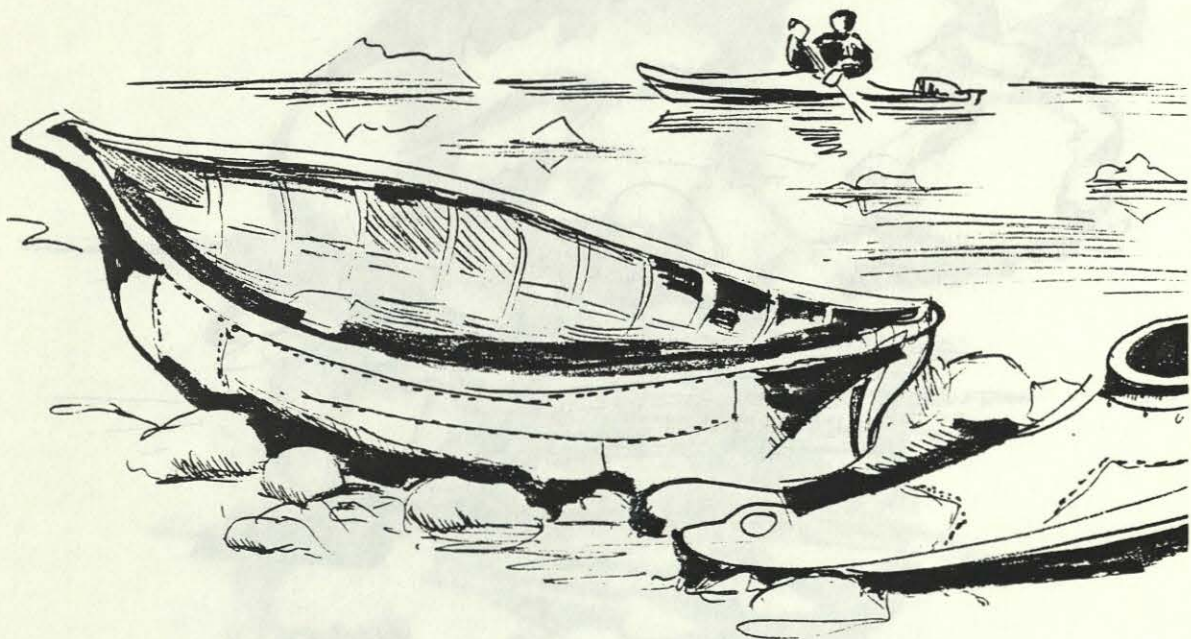




With that the lady shaman began chasing the young man. Around and around the room they ran. Finally the big woman began slowing down. "I am becoming tired," she sighed. "I can't chase you any more!"

Now the young man began chasing the big woman. She was very tired. Before long he caught her and threw her down on the knife, killing her.

After that the young man jumped quickly into his kayak. As if by magic he suddenly knew the way home. On the way he passed many boats, larger than his own, that had washed ashore, killing all the sailors. Yet the young man himself had no more trouble finding his way home safely.





## THE BLIND BOY AND THE LOON

Long ago there was a blind boy who lived with his grandmother. The grandmother was always mean to the boy. The boy could not see to hunt, so the grandmother made him pick greens and go fishing with her.

Even though the boy could not hunt, he had a bow and arrow which had belonged to his father. He was very proud of the bow and arrow. Sometimes he carved arrowheads from scraps of walrus ivory he found.





One day when food was scarce, the boy's grandmother taught him how to make a snare. "I have just taught you how to make something for catching ducks and loons," she said. "Go down to the lake and hide in the bushes. After you have heard a rustling in the snare, run out and club the bird." She pushed her grandson impatiently out of the house.

He had not waited long before he heard a rustling noise in the snare. Jumping up, he reached for the bird and felt a long sleek neck. He knew it must be a loon. Just as he got ready to club the bird, the loon spoke to him. "Blind Boy, do not kill me. I have a family of young babies at home. By tonight they will have starved to death if I do not get back to them."

The Blind Boy felt pity for the bird. Yet he knew if he came home without any game his grandmother would beat him.

"Please let me go home to my little ones," begged the loon. "Someday I will do a great favor for you."





"What could you do for me!" said the blind boy. "But I will let you go...I know what it's like not have any mother." With that he let the loon go.

When the blind boy returned home, his grandmother was very angry. "Useless boy!" she scolded. "I will have to go out myself and get some food. She had not been away long when the boy heard a crashing sound. It was the grandmother running back through the bushes.

"Quick, boy! Get your bow and arrows," screamed the grandmother. "A polar bear is coming!"

After the blind boy had grabbed his bow and arrow, the grandmother helped him aim. The boy heard a thud. He was sure he had hit the bear, but his grandmother told him it had run away. Not long after that, the boy smelled some delicious meat cooking. "That sure smells like bear meat," he said.





"Don't be silly," said his grandmother. "It's only an old lemming. Now go out and get us some berries and mushrooms or you will have nothing to eat."

While the boy was out hunting for berries, a loon flew down to him. "It is time for the favor I have promised you," said the loon. "Come with me to the lake."

At the lake the loon pulled his kayak up on shore. He told the boy to lie down flat on the bottom. The boy did as he was told, and the next thing he knew, the kayak was diving under the cold water. When it came up, the boy thought he could see a little bit. Again the kayak dived under the water. This time, when they came up, the boy could see clearly. "I have received my sight!" he cried. "I can see!"





"Go home," said the loon, "but don't let your grandmother know you can see. By the time you get home she will have cooked the bear meat you got. She will try to feed you garbage, while she eats the bear meat herself."

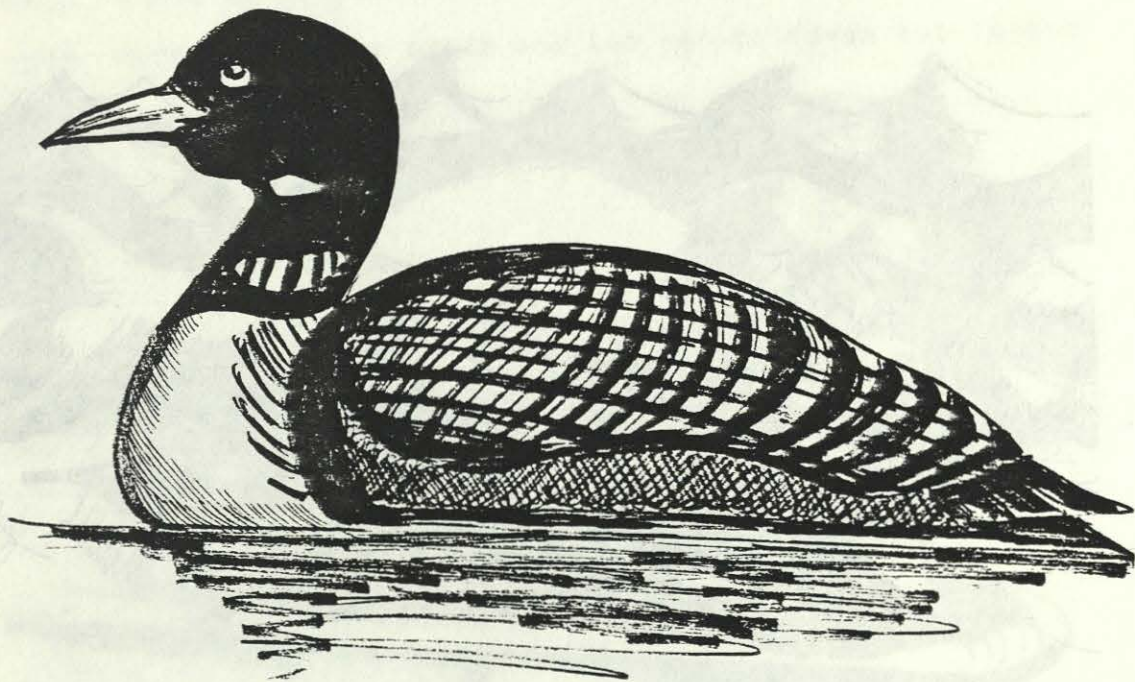
Sure enough, the grandmother shoved an old lemming in front of the boy while she ate bear meat. "Too bad you couldn't have shot a bear for us," she scolded.

At this the boy was so angry he grabbed the grandmother. He ran down to the ocean with her and threw her in. The grandmother went down kicking. When she came back up to the surface she had turned into a big whale. Her hair had become the baleen in the whale's mouth.





Meanwhile the boy went home and made a necklace of ivory arrowheads. Walking down to the shore he called to the loon. When she had flown down to him he said, "you have given me sight. Let me give you this necklace." He slipped the necklace over her throat, and she dived into the water. When she came up, the ivory arrowheads had turned into a necklace of white feathers. This is how the boy could always tell loons from other birds and did not kill them.



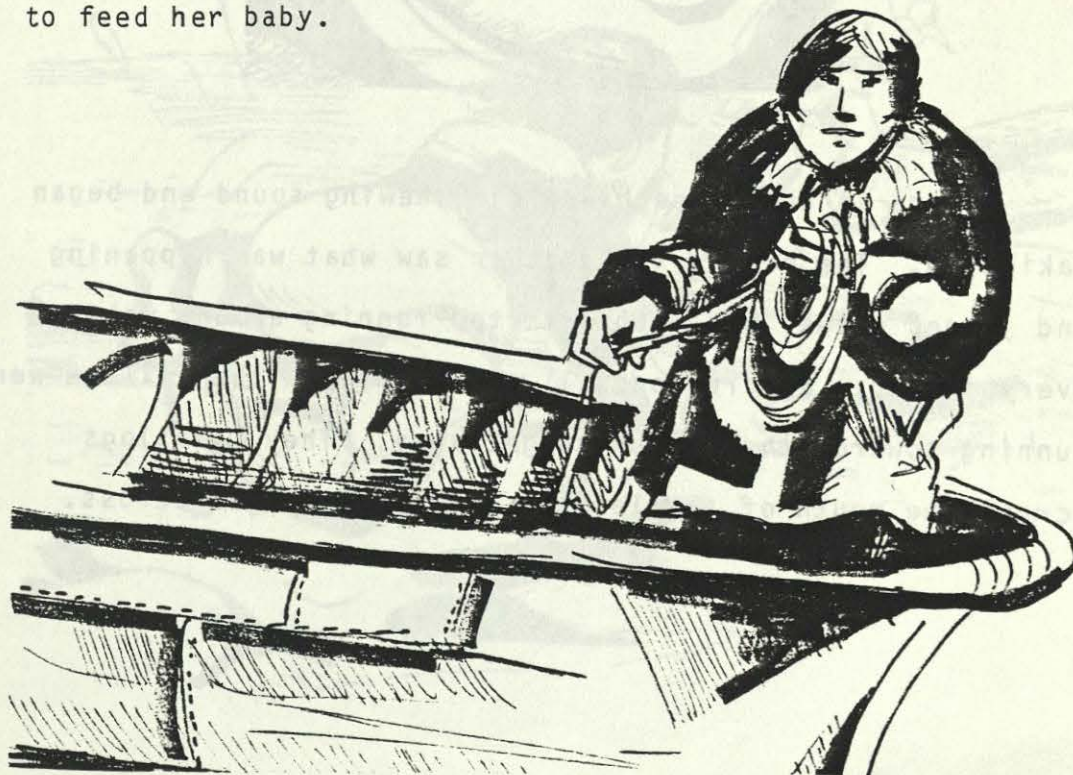


## THE STORY OF KOTZEBUE

Long ago a group of Eskimo people was starting to build a home at a place called Kaikaituruk. The spot was near a lagoon. The leader of the group was a rich man called Oohmelik. Oohmelik had a big boat and fine hunting equipment such as spears, bows and arrows, and a jade knife.

One day after returning from a successful trip, Oohmelik called the villagers for a feast. The women had to prepare the food.

In those days they had a custom. Whenever food was given out, it had to be given to everybody, even the babies. One woman made Eskimo ice cream and fed her children but forgot to feed her baby.





That night after everybody had fallen asleep, the baby was sucking at his mother's breast. Suddenly while he was sucking, teeth began popping out all over his mouth. They were very sharp teeth. With his new teeth the baby started to eat his mother, starting at the breast.

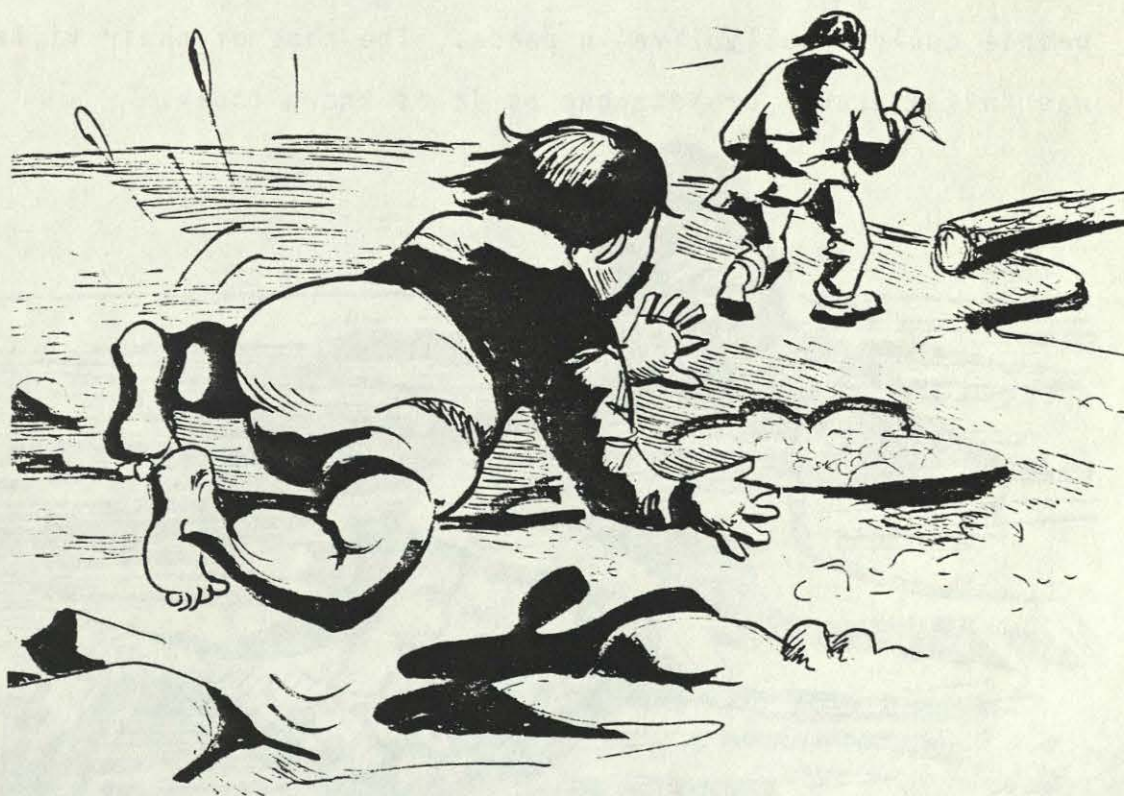


Others in the house heard the chewing sound and began waking up. The baby's grandmother saw what was happening and jumped out of bed. She started running around waking everybody up. Before long all the people in the village were running towards the lagoon to get away. They laid logs across the mouth of the lagoon so they could get across.



When he had crossed over, Oohmelik suddenly remembered his jade knife. He had forgotten it on the other side. He asked if anyone would go back to get his knife. Only one person was willing to go back - a young orphan boy who lived with his grandmother.

When the orphan boy had returned near the village he could hear the baby's shrill voice. Then he spied the baby jumping in his diaper like a rabbit. The orphan boy was running fast with the baby right behind him. The boy reached the lagoon and ran across the log to the other side. Before the baby could get across the log the boy pushed it, and the baby rolled off into the water.





While the people on the shore watched, black hair started coming up at the spot where the baby had disappeared. The thing looked like a big fish. "I am a woman with a fish's body," said the creature. "I have a woman's face and arms, but my body is like a fish. I am going to keep the baby for my own. I warn you people not to try to cross this lagoon or you will disappear.

The people were afraid. Yet they wanted to go back to their village. Finally they got brave and returned, but many men disappeared in the lagoon. Because men were always disappearing in the lagoon, the people kept throwing offerings into the water. After a while they didn't lose any more men. The orphan boy who got the jade knife became a great hunter. The people could finally live in peace. The name of their village was Kaikaituruk - or Kotzebue as it is known today.

